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Trend Craftsman Router Table

Our Anthony's view of Trend's new router table

Trend, being the fount of all things routing, the arrival of a new router table has got to be interesting. This is the CRT/MK3 which is actually Trend's way of saying it is nothing like the previous two Craftsman router tables!

The basic table, minus all the fittings and accessories, is sized exactly as per the simpler Kreg table. It is low and extremely rigid once you go through the routine nuts, bolts and washers assembly exercise.

For me the key component on this table is the insert plate – this is black anodized aluminium, with machine screws to hold it down and grub screws to push it up, thus making levelling really accurate – though there is an unavoidable lack of a grub screw at the centre rear position, where large router bases need to fit directly underneath.

The tough plastic insert rings are no fight to fit or remove, and there are three threaded positions for the supplied lead-in pin. There's also

a hole for the T11 Quick Raiser height adjuster, and mounting holes for all Trend routers.

The mitre slot takes the supplied mitre protractor or a set of plastic pressure fingers.

Underneath the table front, the rubber booted NVR switch is installed, and at the rear are 'devil horns' for stowing the router's cable. A set of brackets can be used to fix the table down to a suitable surface, although the adjustable rubber feet keep it from sliding around.

Fence

The fence is second in importance to a good insert plate and this one, not unduly high, is formed from a rigid black anodized extrusion.

This has white-faced sliding fence cheeks, just like a spindle moulder, plus a set of top pressure spring fingers and a clear plastic top guard.



At the rear, a 57mm dustspout is rigidly installed when assembling the fence, and two tall knobs with coachbolts underneath locate into L-slots in the rear tabletop. The fence can be quickly fitted or removed as needed.

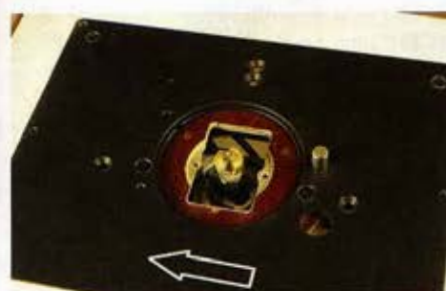
On top of the fence you can apply a stick-on scale, and there are two sliding rods which can be transferred to the rear of the outfeed fence to give



One Allen key is used to make the quite subtle adjustments when levelling the insert – you can re-level it at any time



A neat idea that gets rid of the problem of surplus flex hanging down



All the holes for Trend router mounting, the Quick Raiser and lead-in pin are precision machined into the insert plate

offsets of 1.4mm or 2.4mm when edge planing, thus giving proper support as the wood comes off the cutter.

Verdict

This is the best incarnation of a compact Trend router table so far.

It is very rigid and the insert plate is a joy to set flush, for bump-free machining.

The mitre protractor is slightly sloppy in the track which is a shame if you want exactness.

The fence doesn't impress as much as the table because it simply isn't high enough for some operations that need extra support.

I would be very tempted to drill and fit high facings to the existing ones, which would then allow me to clamp a breakthrough fence in place – all do-able though.

However, there are many little design touches which suggest



Once the lock knobs are undone, slide the fence backwards and off to the side, then you can lift the fence clear of the table for table routing with the lead-in pin only



The clear plastic guard and the spring fingers co-locate on the same bolts, so a little juggling is required to set both

someone has given this table quite a lot of thought and there is great attention to the detail.

The low working height doesn't bother me – it's easy to cart around or you can make a low storage unit for it to sit on... my preferred option.

The T11 is an easy machine to height set in the table due to the Quick Raiser height adjuster, but the equally useful T5 router suffers from an archaic fine height adjuster designed for dovetail jigs that only works under the table, but not through the top and, even then, only over a quite limited height range.

The table itself performs well and is nice to use but rapid, precise height adjustment for any router is a must when inverted in a table, so the T11 would be the best router to use here.

If you are looking for a ready-made, well-made and compact router table, this one certainly fits the bill. ■

AT A GLANCE

- Space-saving design
- Superb insert plate
- Comes with all accessories

THE NUMBERS

- Manufacturer: Trend Machinery UK
- Model: CRT/ MK3 router table
- Table size: 610 x 405 x 26mm
- Bench height: 400mm
- Router cutter aperture: 98mm
- Fence height: 68mm
- Dust spout: 57mm
- Weight: 12.8kg
- Voltage: For 240 volt only
- Accessories: Mitre protractor, spring fingers, clear guard, lead-in pin, push stick
- Price: £238.80 inc VAT

PROS & CONS

- ✓ Ready-made
- ✓ Easy to use
- ✓ Accepts large and small routers
- ✓ Transportable
- ✗ Requires stand to get to working height
- ✗ Pricy
- ✗ Trend-only routers

WHERE TO BUY

- Contact: Trend
- Tel: 01923 249911
- Website: www.trend-uk.com

5 STAR RATING

- Value for money: ★★★★★
- Performance: ★★★★★
- Build quality: ★★★★★